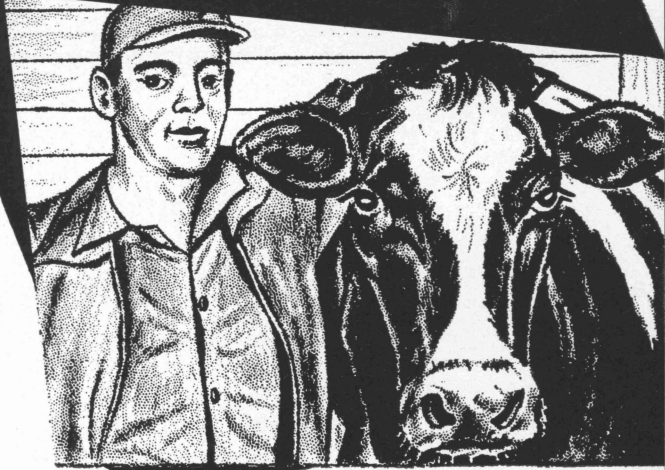


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COW CARE

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- **THE DRY COW**
- **THE FRESH COW**
- **THE MILKING COW**



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COW CARE

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What Cow Care Means

The opportunity for a cow to produce at her best—that is cow care. The breeding program, progressive or otherwise, has fixed the high point of her inherited ability to produce. After conception takes place, that ability cannot be *increased* but her actual producing ability may be *decreased* if she is not provided the opportunity she needs.

Many cows have more *ability* than they have *opportunity*. These cows produce more for some dairymen than for others. Why? Some dairymen are better calf-raisers, better feeders, better milkers, better cow-men, and better managers. All of these add up to *cow care*.

The Growing Heifer

A cow's opportunity to make a profit begins the day she is born. The care she gets as a heifer largely determines the kind of cow she will be. Here are some *cow care* suggestions for the heifer stage:

- Apply sound feeding and management practices to get the newborn calf off to a good start.
- Prevent calves from sucking each other.
- Prevent scouring.
- Watch for symptoms of stomach worms.
- Treat for lice.
- Combat the fly problem.
- Dehorn early.
- Vaccinate for brucellosis.
- Check normal growth rates and feed accordingly.
- Provide supplemental feed in addition to pasture and roughage for heifers under 10 months of age.
- Breed when of proper size, not by age alone. Keep breeding date.
- Begin training for proper milking by putting heifer in milking string two or three weeks before freshening.

Well-bred, well-developed heifers make large, productive cows.

The Two-Year Old Heifer

The 2-year-old heifer is still a young growing animal. Before reaching maturity she should gain from 300 to 500 pounds depending upon the breed. As a young animal her growth impulse is still strong and she makes her growth more economically at this time than later.

A 2-year-old heifer, just beginning her milking lifetime, should have the following opportunities of *cow care*:

- Proper training for good milking.
- More than two daily milkings for high-producing heifers as long as udder pressure requires them.
- Adequate feeding for both growth and production.
- A fair chance at the feed trough.
- A production record by which to be fed and judged.

A well-developed heifer will return during the first lactation enough to just about pay for her keep from birth. Good *cow care* gives her an opportunity to make a profit during the rest of her life.

The Dry Cow

The dry cow no doubt is the most neglected animal on the dairy farm. Yet, the dry period is the timing mechanism for the entire lactation. The care a cow gets during her dry period determines the profit or loss she returns during the next 10 or 12 months. Research shows that failure to get good *cow care* during the dry period may reduce milk production as much as 20 to 30 percent.

To give the dry cow the opportunity she needs for doing an efficient job, these practices should be applied:

- Turn her dry 6 to 8 weeks before calving.
- Feed adequate minerals and vitamins during dry period.
- In addition to roughage and pasture, feed grain mixture as her physical condition requires.
- Feed wheat bran or a bulky, laxative ration during last 2 weeks prior to calving, taking care not to feed a ration especially high in protein.
- Confine the cow to the calving area during the last 2 weeks.

Proper care during the dry period pays dividends!

The Fresh Cow

The care a fresh cow gets during her first 2 weeks helps set the pace for the next few months when she is trying to reach her inherited ability.

These practices have proved to be good *cow care* at this stage:

- Provide a clean area for calving and shelter during bad weather.
- Be on hand to give any needed assistance during calving.
- Be sure cow passes afterbirth in due time.
- Continue to feed wheat bran or a bulky, laxative ration first week or 10 days after calving.
- See that the calf nurses soon after calving.
- Give necessary care for abnormally congested udders.
- Make gradual change to the regular herd grain mixture.
- Do not breed until 60 days after calving.

Do not push the cow too fast. Allow at least 6 to 8 weeks for her to reach full production. The fresh cow's udder glands and reproductive tract must have time to return to normal condition.

The Milking Cow

This is the pay-off stage. If good *cow care* has been practiced during a heifer's first 2 years, she is now ready to produce at her best, provided she has further opportunity. On the other hand it is difficult to overcome harm already done if proper care has been lacking. At this stage, the milking cow's producing ability can be defined as being her inherited ability minus the *cow care* not provided.

These opportunities allow the milking cow to produce at her best:

- Balanced feeding program.
- Production record by which to be fed and judged.
- Good milking procedure.
- Clean, cool drinking water at all times.
- Adequate shelter and shade.
- Quiet, comfortable environment.

This is the whole story in summary—A good cow plus good cow care equals good production.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

- B-69 Feeding and Care of the Dairy Herd
- B-178 Raising Dairy Calves
- B-252 A Milking Procedure for the Dairy Herd
- C-284 Developing Dairy Heifers

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